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NOTICE

MINERAL INFORMATION SERVICE TO BE DISTRIBUTED BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 1957

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Increasing costs of printing and distribution as the circulation of *MINERAL INFORMATION SERVICE* has grown to over 30,000 copies each month make it necessary to institute a charge of \$1 per year, beginning next month, January 1, 1957.

An order envelope and instructions to subscribers have been mailed under separate cover.

PEAT

Peat deposits are widespread in California, but only in four areas are the deposits known to be of suitable quality, large enough, and so located to be of present commercial value. These areas, from which substantial amounts of peat have been mined and then processed, are the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area, Orange County, Modoc County, and Santa Cruz County.

In the United States peat is used mostly as a soil conditioner and in mixed fertilizers. Very small amounts are used as mull or litter material for domestic animals, as packing material, and in chemical applications such as filtering and tanning. Although peat has been used as a fuel in other countries, the abundance of higher rank fuels in the United States has kept peat out of the domestic fuel industry.

During 1953, 9,196 tons of peat valued at \$73,897 were produced in California. To help meet the increasing demand for agricultural peat, large quantities of peat moss were shipped into California primarily from Canada with occasional shipments from eastern states. The major peat producers in California are initiating expansion programs to meet this demand.

Geologic Occurrence. Peat is an accumulation of partly decomposed and disintegrated vegetal matter representing the first stage in the metamorphism of plants to coal. It forms in undrained depressions, plains, or river deltas that contain environments favorable to luxuriant growth of peat-forming plants. The plants range from woody shrubs and trees of swamps, to mosses, sedges, reeds and grasses of marshes. Poor drain-



Grinding and stockpiling peat at the Vita-Peat Corporation's plant on Bethel Island in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area.

age is essential in the formation of peat, because standing water largely excludes oxygen and prevents complete decay, thus enabling the carbonaceous matter to be preserved.

The type of vegetation that accumulates determines the type of peat that is formed. The most valuable and sought-after commercial peat is formed from aquatic mosses. Most of this material is either a sphagnum or hypnum moss, and is known in the industry as peat moss. Other commercial grades of peat include reed or sedge peat, and peat humus which is a soil high in organic matter. Most of the peat produced in California is classified as peat humus and reed or sedge peat. A high-grade peat moss, however, is recovered from a single bog in Modoc County in northern California.